

Exploring the nature of social preferences and their economic significance : four experimental studies

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Stellingen (Propositions)

behorende bij het proefschrift: (to accompany the thesis entitled:)

“ Exploring the nature of social preferences
and their economic significance:
four experimental studies ”

door Aurelie Petit dit Dariel

Propositions

1. The development of a methodology for conducting laboratory experiments in economics in the 1960's has had a noticeable impact on economic theories which up until recently were mostly evaluated on their mathematical elegance and parsimony rather than how well they explained data and predicted behavior.
2. Laboratory experiments have enabled social scientists to investigate the nature of individual preferences by isolating different forces that can affect behavior.
3. Evidence from laboratory experiments has indicated that participants have social preferences and hence are willing to help or hurt others at a personal cost.
4. The fact that individuals may care about the welfare of others has important implications for public economics, labor economics and environmental economics, amongst others.
5. Nearly all participants in a series of experiments were found to exhibit reciprocal preferences and engage in 'gift-exchange', i.e., they were willing to take costly actions to help another individual who did the same for them previously. (Chapter 2)
6. The intensity of reciprocal preferences was weak in the sense that gift-exchange was not profitable and as a consequence was found to disappear over time. (Chapter 2)
7. Social preferences appear to be robust across strategically different situations, i.e., individuals behaving pro-socially in one situation are more likely to behave pro-socially in a strategically different situation. (Chapter 3)
8. The elicited social preferences can be sensitive to framing effects. (Chapter 4)
9. Social networks can help alleviate the problem of adverse selection in labor markets if workers tend to refer individuals in their network of similar ability. (Chapter 5)